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**Testimony of Michael Deren, MD,  
Connecticut State Medical Society  
House Bill 6600, An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Sustinet Plan  
March 2, 2009**

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee, Senator Crisco, Representative Fontana and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, Senator Doyle and Representative Walker and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Dr. Michael Deren and I am currently the Council Chairman of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS). On behalf of our more than 7,000 member, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today in support of the **House Bill 6600**, the Sustinet program.

During my career as a practicing physician, I have reviewed many proposals for healthcare reform and both the state and federal level. Many times, they were written in a vacuum, without a doctor in the room. They contained some interesting ideas, but many of those ideas couldn't work in the doctors' offices across Connecticut.

That's not the case with **House Bill 6600**.

The Connecticut State Medical Society has been pleased to be an advisor as this plan was developed. For two years, we've had a seat at the table talking about what works in our health care system – and just as importantly – what doesn't.

There's always a lot of talk about "access to medical care." What does that really mean?

- We're talking about making sure everyone who needs to see a doctor can see a doctor, regardless of whether they have private insurance, Medicare, Medicaid or HUSKY.
- We're talking about getting patients out of the emergency room and into doctor's offices.
- And we're talking about building a healthier Connecticut, something my organization has been dedicated to since 1792.

**House Bill 6600** includes important provisions to do those things. For example, the CSMS Workforce Survey showed us that patients are having a harder time

accessing medical and surgical specialists. This legislation improves that situation through the establishment of what are known as medical homes.

SustiNet makes significant inroads in addressing the spiraling costs associated with those who suffer from chronic illness through monitoring and coordination. Any physician in this room can tell you that a patient who does not comply with orders is less likely to improve than a patient who follows a physician's instructions.

The vast majority of Connecticut physicians are like me, in small practices. We want to implement electronic medical records programs, but costs are high, and few of us have extra funds to invest.

I chose to practice medicine to care for people – not to argue with insurance companies about what my patients need.

I practice medicine because I want to give my patients a chance at better health and a longer life.

Quality health care must not be divided between "haves" and "have-nots."

If the concepts in the Sustinet plan become law, important changes will help bring more doctors to Connecticut at a time when we need more doctors.

We believe today's proposals match many of the concerns expressed by physicians across the state. And we urge you to embrace these concepts and make them reality.

Thank you.